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UNCLAS ROME 000795

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MGLE01: ITALY INSISTS THAT SYRIA COMPLY WITH UNSC 1559

REF: STATE 39018

1. (U) Italy strongly insists, in both public and private statements, on the complete and swift withdrawal of all Syrian forces from Lebanon. FM Fini issued a public statement on March 8 (see para. 2), and our MFA interlocutors continue to press their Syrian counterparts as well.

2. (U) Begin text of FM Fini's statement. Syria's military redeployment in the Baka'a Valley is a step in the right direction if it leads, in a short space of time, to the complete withdrawal of all Syrian forces (military and security services) present in Lebanon. Italy, together with all its EU partners supports the need to fully and unconditionally implement the Security Council's Resolution 1559, which foresees the withdrawal of all foreign military forces from Lebanon, and the disarmament of the armed militias. Lebanon has to recover its full independence and sovereignty. We share the current demands of the Lebanese political forces, which are aimed at the stabilization and reconciliation of the Middle East region, something Italy has continually pursued. The worry and fear that the situation in Lebanon could explode and contaminate the entire region, are leading Italy to ask Syria for an act of courage in implementing the Ta'if Agreements and Resolution 1559. Afterwards, Damascus will be able to reestablish its relationship with Lebanon on the basis of equality, reciprocal respect and sovereignty, conscious that the long-standing brotherly relations between Syria and Lebanon will in any case continue. At Minister Fini's invitation, the Syrian Foreign Affairs Minister, Farouk Shara'a, will visit Rome on 6 April. End text.

3. (SBU) Post delivered Reftel demarche to Luca Ferrari, the head of the MFA's Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, on March 8. Pol M/C followed up with the MFA Political Director, Giulio Terzi, on March 9, telling him that the US welcomed Fini's statement and urging Italy to continue making public and private statements to Syria along the same firm line.

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2005ROME00795 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED